CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

Fatal Effects to a TRADING NATION

Of the preſent Exceſs of

PUBLIC CHARITIES.

IN WHICH

The Magdalene, Aſylum, Foundling, Hoſpitals for Sick and Lame, Lying in Hoſpitals, Charity Schools, and the Diſſenting Fund, are particularly conſidered.

And a Plan for a New Syſtem of POORS LAWS propoſed.

by Dr. Cowper. q.

Virtue itſelf turns Vice, being miſapplied.

SHAKESPEAR.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE author has no other recommendation, or apology for the following ſheets, but that he is thoroughly convinced the cenſures are true, and hopes the propoſed amendments, if tried, will prove uſeful. His inducement to this publication is to ſhow how far from beneficial, the too numerous charities are, even to the very poor; and in the next place, to promote a regulation in the poors laws, and thereby relieve the induſtrious houſe-keepers, from a moſt grievous and burthenſome tax. The author apprehends theſe regulations will anſwer two moſt valuable ends; firſt, prevent idleneſs, and ſecondly ſave money; both which are by the war, but particularly by the German war, rendered more neceſſary at this period

period of time, than they ever were ſince we have been a nation; for our money has been tranſported by millions, and our men by ten thouſands; and without any great ſkill in politics, it is exceedingly clear, that the former never will return, and it is to be feared, that very few of the latter, will ever ſee their native country. It is not the preſent buſineſs to determine, whether the cruel circumſtances of the times, obliged you to raiſe twenty millions annually, and keep near three hundred thouſand men in arms; but the fact is, that both were done, and the well-known, and experienced conſequence is, the ſcarcity of men and money, and the only recompence that can be made, or the only poſſible method of alleviating the miſfortune is, to ſave all ſuperfluous expences, and oblige your poor to labour, elſe, at the peace you will find, that the ſcarcity of hands, and the additional load of taxes, will raiſe your manufactures to ſuch an exorbitant price, as to render them unſaleable at foreign markets; if this ever happens, of which there

there ſeems the greateſt danger, we ſhall be a moſt deſpicable ſtate; with our trade will fall all our conſequence at home and abroad; we ſhall be unable to ſupport our navy, and of courſe, a prey to any enterpriſing prince, that is in a condition to tranſport a few thouſand men to invade us.

The author has the ſatisfaction of being thoroughly perſuaded, that there is not in the whole eſſay, a ſingle word derogatory to real charity; and that his only view in ſubmitting theſe ſheets to the public, is, to ſuppreſs ſuch charities as tend to encourage, and promote knavery, bigotry, and every ſpecies of vice and indolence.

As the author intended this for publication near a twelve-month ſince, he now with great regret finds an illiberal diſpute between the Engliſh and Scotch, and many unwarrantable arts made uſe of to ſet them at variance: as he has conſidered the Scotch literature with great freedom, he thinks it neceſ-

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ſary to declare, that it was not done with any intention to injure the people, or with the leaſt regard to the preſent party feuds, but from a conviction, that they had better apply to trade than learning; as a nation he looks on them as worthy and honeſt in civil life, and valiant and indefatigable in the military: he ſincerely applauds their late application to commerce, and wiſhes the union may become real inſtead of nominal; but cannot help treating their pretenſions to a ſuperiority in literature, with the greateſt contempt, and as an inſtance not only of folly, but an undoubted proof of their total ignorance of Engliſh education.

Conſiderations, &c.

NATIONS, like individuals, are often expoſed by their virtues, to the groſſeſt impoſitions, and greateſt inconveniencies; England is an inſtance of this fatal truth, for Charity, the moſt noble, and exalted of virtues, is, by profuſion, miſapplication, and exceſs, becoming our bane, and deſtruction; it is proſtituted to the vileſt ends, made ſubſervient to every iniquitous ſcheme, and is the ſupporter, and promoter of vice, idleneſs, debauchery, and bigotry.

CHARITY, to be beneficial, muſt be confined to proper objects; none ought to be relieved, but ſuch as are deſtitute of money, and incapacitated by diſorders, or infirmities, from labour: every tie of nature, and humanity, obliges

you to aſſiſt theſe: the injury to the community, ariſing from the compulſatory laws to keep all the poor, who prefer idleneſs to induſtry, and from the too numerous charities, is, fixing in the labouring people an idea, that miſery cannot be attendant on poverty; the conſequence of which is, that they who formerly did, and now would work ſix days in a week, in order to provide, not only for the immediate neceſſaries of life, but for their wives lying-in, ſickneſs, and other expenſive occaſions, ſeldom labour four, ſpending the gain of the laſt week, before they think of getting more. The indolence of the common people, for one, or two days at the beginning of the week, is a fact that I believe cannot be doubted, and the effects of it muſt be exceedingly fatal to a trading nation; for it is ſelf-evident, that a perſon without property, living in idleneſs, is worſe than loſt to the ſtate, being not only uſeleſs, but becoming burthenſome to the induſtrious. Another fact is, that the common people are never idle without being vicious; drunkenneſs, and debauchery ruin their con-

conſtitutions, ſickneſs incapacitates them for labour, ſo they become objects of your own manufacture; and if charity is not reſtrained, and the poor's laws regulated, in half a century, the major part of the nation may be reaſonably expected to be vagabonds.

POORS LAWS were unknown in this kingdom till the reign of queen Elizabeth, when the promoters of the proteſtant religion, ſuppoſed themſelves under the neceſſity of ſubſtituting a relief for the poor, inſtead of the donations received from the Abbies, and Monaſteries; or it would have greatly retarded, if not entirely prevented, the Reformation: 'till that time, the indolent had no certain proviſion; and even at this day, it is the caſe in Scotland, there being no proviſion by law for the poor, nor any money appropriated to their uſe, but ſuch voluntary contributions, as are collected at the church-doors, which are diſpoſed of by the miniſters, and elders, as they think proper. If we look back to the time of queen Elizabeth, and previous to her reign, we ſhall ſee how much more difficult it was for the poor to pro-

vide for themſelves, than at preſent; their trade, and manufactures were in no kind of proportion to the people: now it is the exact contrary, for ſo far from there being a difficulty to get employ, we want hands to carry on our vaſt, and extenſive trade. The great increaſe of the Britiſh navy is a conſtant, and very deſtructive employ for many thouſands of our men; we have acquired, and peopled many colonies, and countries; and ſince that, we have ſtanding armies, a thing unknown in thoſe times, for they did not ſuffer their princes, even guards; the great increaſe of trade, is the increaſe of wealth; luxury is the never-failing attendant on riches; conſider how many of the very prime of the people are taken from labour, only as attendants on the opulent: in the ſingle article of livery ſervants, I ſuppoſe there are five hundred to one kept in eaſe and idleneſs, and loſt to ſociety, to what they were in the reign of Elizabeth. For theſe reaſons it is evident, that every man may get work, and by their living one third of their time in idleneſs, it is clear they might ſave;

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from which I infer, that no inhabitant in this kingdom, can be a real object of charity, or ought to be relieved who has the uſe of his limbs.

THE MODERN CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS in general, are no leſs iniquitous than detrimental and unneceſſary; charity is the maſk, private emolument the real motive with their promoters; the pretence is to aſſiſt the poor; the true deſign to make an advantageous, and profitable place for themſelves. Moſt of the hoſpitals have been founded by the intrigues of the very dregs of phyſic; wretches deſtitute of learning, and honeſty, with no phyſical knowledge, ſuperior to that obtained by beating in a mortar, yet become phyſicians, by purchaſing a degree at ſome Scotch ſeminary; who, to their eternal ſhame, proſtitute their literary honours for ſmall rewards, with as little regard to merit, as an unfortunate Covent-Garden nymph does her body. There are laws to puniſh thoſe who practiſe without ſubmitting to examination, and obtaining a licence; but, ſtrange to be told! theſe laws lie dormant at the medical manſion in Warwick-

Warwick-lane; and by the ſufferance of our phyſical guardians, theſe impoſtors are left at liberty to deſtroy our conſtitutions in private, and to defraud us of our money in public, by raiſing charitable contributions, than which nothing is more eaſy; for the very word charity gives them free acceſs to the purſes of the pious; and the vain, and ſimple are captivated with the dignity, and importance of being governors, and allured with a ridiculous annual parade from a ſermon to a feaſt. Thus, by ſiniſter arts, you have theſe charitable nuiſances without the promoters, and very few of the ſupporters, having any attention to the public good!

By the 27th of Henry VIII. chap. 25. "No perſon was to make any open, or "common dole, or to give any money "in alms but to the common boxes, and "common gatherings in every pariſh, "on pain of forfeit ten times ſo much "as was given." If this law was at that time expedient, how neceſſary muſt it be at preſent, when every day furniſhes you with a new religious diſſention! This very fatal effect, proceeds from the unlimited

limited power, which every tolerated teacher aſſumes of collecting money for the poor, and on various other pretences : an inſtance of the great eaſe with which it is obtained, is, that a methodiſt in one day, (the faſt in 1761), collected near ſix hundred pounds, for the diſtreſſed proteſtants in the new marche of Brandenburgh ; that this large ſum may be applied as intended, I cannot deny, but every intelligent perſon muſt ſee, that the collector has it in his power to give it, or keep it, for none of his congregation can know any of theſe diſtreſſed proteſtants, or any of them know his congregation ; ſuppoſing this money to be faithfully applied, yet the impoveriſhing our people to relieve foreigners, and perhaps to bring the donors on the pariſh, is a practice that ought to be prohibited. A well-known, and experienced injury to ſociety, proceeding from this extravagant charitable diſpoſition is, that their teachers take the advantage of the ill-judged piety of weak women, and promote, if not perſuade them to give the monies, appropriated to their families, to what are called cha-

rities; this occaſions not only every family diſquiet, but often entire ruin to the parties, and is little better than a robbery within the letter of the law. There is a very large ſum of money annually collected by the diſſenters, which forms a fund appropriated to promote, and encourage a diſſention from the church throughout the kingdom: notwithſtanding the apparent zeal of theſe diſſenting teachers for their cauſe, it is very remarkable that few, I believe I might venture to ſay, none of note ever brought up their children to their own employ, nor will any others of property belonging to the ſect; ſo the uſe made of this fund is to take the children of the very loweſt of their people, and educate them for teachers: the ſeeing a child in the pulpit, is the utmoſt ambition of theſe ignorant mechanics, who with the greateſt alacrity, make their ſons leave their more uſeful, even more profitable employs, to ſatisfy their own vanity. When they have finiſhed what they call their ſtudies, they are by the directors of the fund diſperſed all over the country, moſt of them at places ſo little diſpoſed

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to diſſentions, that they will not provide for their teachers; and if it was not for ſmall ſalaries from this fund, theſe poor men muſt return to labour, and their congregations to the mother-church. I would have every man left at liberty to worſhip God, in the manner he thinks moſt acceptable; but, no man ought to be permitted to propagate his follies, or ſuffered to depreciate, and miſrepreſent the eſtabliſhed religion of his country, in order to benefit himſelf by the diſſentions, nor ſhould knaves find toleration, for every ſpecies of bigotry, when their intent is apparently to impoſe, and raiſe contributions on the weak, and credulous. While this ſort of charity is ſuffered, it is impoſſible for our diſſentions to diminiſh; for as long as a few religious abſurdities, will raiſe a congregation, and the teacher has the command of his audiences purſes, ſo long there will be impoſtors of this ſort, who will prefer a livelihood got by roaring, whining, canting, and other ſpecies of religious craft, one day in

ſeven, to the honeſt labour of ſix days in a week.

GENERAL proviſions for the poor, have baniſhed the beſt kind of charity, for old Engliſh hoſpitality, and private benevolences, are heard of no more; the man who pays three ſhillings in the pound to the poor, or is an annual ſubſcriber to an Hoſpital, thinks he has done his duty very ſufficiently, without any private aids: by this the truly diſerving poor are the ſufferers; for the modeſt, and induſtrious are aſhamed to aſk, or receive theſe public charities, and are obliged without help, or aſſiſtance to ſtruggle with the hardſhips of life; while what their virtues deprives them of, is beſtowed on miſcreants.

INTIRELY diveſted of prejudice againſt any, and free from partiality, I ſhall proceed to conſider the moſt remarkable of the modern inſtitutions, and ſhall endeavour to ſet them in a true light; which is very different to what

the folly, or knavery of the parties have as yet, repreſented them to public view. Conſcious as I am, of writing againſt the intereſt of an infinite number, and in oppoſition to the opinion of the major part of mankind, I will proceed, being thoroughly ſatisfied of the truth of the aſſertions, and by no means deſpairing, that the whole nation may in time, ſee their groſs error, and provide for real objects, without encouraging vice, ſloth, and indolence in the whole body of the people.

THAT moſt infamous inſtitution, that degrades the very name of charity, called the MAGDALENE, undoubtedly claims the firſt rank in cenſure: it was founded under the ſpecious pretence of reforming proſtitutes; but can be looked on in no other light, than the greateſt encourager of vice, that could have been invented. As the ſoldier, and ſailor, find their toils and dangers rewarded, with a quiet retreat at Chelſea, and Greenwich, ſo do theſe unfortunate women in the Magdalene for when age and diſeaſe,

has rendered them unfit for the ſervice of Venus, they here find a proviſion; as one ſhould ſuppoſe, for their former virtues. The taking theſe abandoned, incorrigible wretches out of a way of Life, that the habitude of vice, has made them only fit for; and whoſe places will certainly be ſupplied with others, and moſt likely occaſion the ſeducing the innocent, and uſeful members of ſociety, can never be deemed doing good, but is, and ever will be, the greateſt injury to the Community. As the ſtinking carcaſes of criminals, are hung by the road ſide, to deter the abandoned, from committing thoſe crimes for which they have ſuffered, ſo Providence ſeems to have deſigned, and policy permitted, the miſerable exits of a few profligate women, to terrify thoughtleſs young females, from following courſes, ſo deſtructive to themſelves, and detrimental to ſociety. Theſe horrid proſpects of poverty, diſeaſe, and miſery, tho' not the immediate, yet were the certain conſequence of proſtitution; but, are ſo no more; for by this moſt fatal inſtitution

tion, they are all baniſhed, and a girl of the lower rank, will, as long as the Magdalene remains, find it her intereſt, as I fear it is too often her inclination, to prefer the alluring paths of vice, to the cares and fatigues of the virtuous wife. I cannot ſet in a ſtronger light, the much-to-be-lamented advantage, vice has at preſent over virtue, than in relating the real ſituation of that courteſan, whoſe name is familiar with all ranks: when ſhe was chaſte, ſhe was as poor as ſhe was inconſiderable; but, when ſhe became vicious, ſhe became miſtreſs of all the apparent enjoyments of life; equipages ſplendid as a dutcheſs; a retinue that would grace an ambaſſador; a noble habitation, and a princely table; when you ſee her in public, you ſee her dreſt in the rich magnificence of a lady-mayoreſs at a city ball, and careſſed by the gay youth of the firſt rank; how muſt it add to her vanity, and imaginary conſequence to ſee her face, from a picture of that truly great, and unrivaled maſter, whoſe pencil is one of

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the firſt ornaments to Britiſh arts, hanging in every print-ſhop with princes, and heroes to be gazed at, and admired by the populace! This is her preſent happy and exalted life; but had ſhe remained virtuous, ſhe would have been earning her bread, in ſome mantua-maker's garret, or milliner's ſhop, unknown and diſregarded. If extravagance, or misfortune reduces her to poverty, ſhe will find an ample proviſion, and quiet retreat in the Magdalene, whoſe gates ſhe would have found barred againſt her, had ſhe remained chaſte and virtuous; for they receive vice with open arms, while diſtreſſed virtue is drove from their threſhold. A foundation of this nature, that tends to promote, and encourage vice; and which, one can hardly conceive could be ſupported by any but bawds, and debauchees, to facilitate their deſigns on the innocent, and which has baniſhed the idea of miſery, being the future effect of vice, ought to be ſuppreſſed, as contrary to divine, and human laws; and what one could ſcarce believe

believe would have remained in being for a day in a country, that encourages marriage, or had ever heard of virtue. I cannot leave this ſubject without obſerving, that this deluſive charity, is not ſupported from a conviction, or even ſuppoſition of its utility, but the meer curioſity of ſeeing the proſtitutes, and hearing the ſinging, that collects an infinite number of people, every Sunday at the chapel, who leave their donations, as they give a long train of ſervants after an entertainment, not becauſe they think their money well beſtowed, but becauſe it is cuſtomary; who, without regarding the uſe, pay for their amuſement at the Magdalene, as they formerly did at the blaſphemous orator Henly's.

THE ASYLUM is innocent, becauſe harmleſs; but ridiculous, becauſe uſeleſs: it can be no injury to the public to provide for a few poor girls, tho' one can ſcarcely refrain from laughter, when one finds this diminutive inſtitution promoted under the notion of preventing the

the debauchery of this great capital. It cannot be a neceſſary charity, becauſe it is only a narrow, abſurd, and confined proviſion for thoſe that are amply provided for by the laws of the land in their reſpective pariſhes. I do not remember to have heard of the debauching Pariſh Girls; and when they come into the world, their inclinations, temptations, and opportunities to be profligate, and abandoned, will be exactly the ſame, whether they come from the Aſylum, or have been brought up by the pariſh.

On this occaſion I cannot help lamenting, that magiſtrates ſhould employ themſelves in theſe romantic ſchemes, when by executing their office with diligence and fidelity, they could do more real ſervice to ſociety; perhaps not to themſelves. Debauchery never can be ſuppreſſed, but may be regulated; the making proſtitutes too difficult to be procured has been ever attended with very fatal conſequences, even of rapes and murders; but their plying in the ſtreets

ſtreets is entirely owing to the negligence of the magiſtrates; it is here, that by their lewd habits and converſation, they tempt the unwary, thoſe who ſo far from ſeeking a brothel, would have ſtarted at the name; the married man and the ſchool-boy become their prey, often to their own ruin and their family's miſery: if they were excluded the ſtreets, the debauched muſt ſeek them, and not they, the innocent; and then, by ſuffering one evil, you prevent many greater: but, if we ſhould ſee a magiſtrate, inhabiting a ſtreet as full of public, and notorious bawdy-houſes, as Cheapſide is of drapers, and who cannot walk from his own door, without joſtling whores, and he ſhould omit putting in execution the old laws, and neglect his common and well-known duty, while he is buſied in raiſing money for new charities, under the pretence of ſuppreſſing vice, whoſe utility is at leaſt very remote, if ever probable; then may we not with juſtice conclude, that his charitable zeal proceeds from find-

ing it his private advantage, and not from a public ſpirit, or a deſign of doing good?

HAD the FOUNDLING HOSPITAL been inſtituted in any but this age of charitable frenzy, it might have been confined according to the title, "to expoſed and "diſtreſſed young children," and received only helpleſs and forlorn babes, who by being deſtitute of parent, or friend, are too often left to expire in the ſtreet, or at beſt in the arms of a pariſh nurſe; then it would have been an excellent and truly noble charity indeed: but it was ſcarcely eſtabliſhed, when the over-grown zeal of the governors, and the ill-timed liberality of the nation, converted it into a general, and undiſtinguiſhing receptacle, for every child that was offered; by which means the rich, enticed by the ſecreſy of admittance, burdened the public with their natural children, who were before as willing to provide for them as they were able; and the lower ſort of people were tempted to

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ſend theirs, in order to live in idleneſs, ſloth and drunkenneſs. What induced the governors of this charity, to attempt ſuch a monopoly, is not eaſy to conceive; for the moſt zealous advocate for the Foundling, cannot pretend that the beſt regulated hoſpital in Europe can bring up a child ſo properly as the parents; nor deny but it is injurious to ſociety, thus to deſtroy the natural, and neceſſary connection of parent and child, and leave theſe poor wretches, to come into the world void of friend, or relation to direct, or aſſiſt them, to encourage them in virtue, or warn them from vice. Another very material objection to this foundation was, that it contributed to draw the inhabitants out of the country into this enormous metropolis, an evil that will be ſeverely felt by the next generation; for if a remedy is not applied, the country will be deſolate, and agriculture at a ſtand, while this amazing town is glutted with inhabitants. I cannot help being much concerned at the entire ſuppreſſion of this charity, tho'

I think it much more eligible, than ſuffering it on the former deſtructive footing. How it could at preſent be made uſeful is not eaſy to determine; but ſhould this nation be ſo happy to ſee the long intended reformation in the poors laws, it may then become an unexceptionable part of the ſyſtem.

MANY are the pretences made uſe of in favour of LYING-IN-HOSPITALS, that they provide for the wives of ſoldiers, ſailors, and poor mechanics, who would otherwiſe be left friendleſs, and deſtitute, and probably periſh for want of aſſiſtance in this time of danger; the only misfortune that attends theſe very popular arguments, is, that they are abſolutely falſe and groundleſs; for there neither is, nor can be ſuch a thing in any part of England, as a perſon left deſtitute; the pariſh will provide for them, and I am much miſinformed, if they are not taken as good care of in the workhouſe, and fewer die than in theſe hoſpitals. Beſides, theſe poor objects being unac-

quainted with the governors, and not admitted without their order, are ſtill left to the care of the pariſh, while theſe hoſpitals, ſaid to be founded for their ſole benefit, are filled with the wives and friends of the ſubſcribers ſervants. I am thoroughly ſatisfied, that lying-in-hoſpitals are quite unneceſſary, and not only ſo, but highly injurious to ſociety, by taking from the common people one of the greateſt ſpurs to induſtry; the moſt abandoned and inhuman wretches, have a great affection for their wives on theſe occaſions, and as they are neither ſudden, nor accidental, they have both time and inclination, to make a proviſion, and by this means, they become more induſtrious, and of courſe more uſeful members to the community. If the contributors to ſuch charities would ſeek proper objects, and diſtribute the money to the poor in private, inſtead of ſupporting theſe public temptations to indolence, it would be more ſerviceable to the induſtrious, and not detrimental to the public, and give pleaſure to all that con-

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ſider them in the true light, men-midwives and matrons to theſe houſes only excepted, whoſe private views make them ſolicitous to ſupport theſe unneceſſary, and prejudicial foundations.

HOSPITALS for SICK and LAME, are moſt undoubtedly neceſſary in ſuch a metropolis as this; becauſe, during tedious illneſſes, broken limbs, and nice operations, it is not to be conceived, that the poor labouring people can procure proper attendance, ſuppoſing they could ſupport themſelves; and it is expedient to have a variety of different diſorders collected together, for the inſtruction of phyſical ſtudents, who, by attending the practice of learned and experienced phyſicians and ſurgeons, gain more practical knowledge in a few months, than in private buſineſs can be attained in many years. Thus, they become abſolutely neceſſary, independent of charity. But becauſe two, or three, as St. Bartholomew's, St. Thomas's, and St. George's are beneficial, is it not to be underſtood, that

that two, or three and twenty will not be exceedingly prejudicial. Theſe hoſpitals have in general been attended by the moſt eminent, and able practitioners of the age; but great is the contraſt between theſe, and the new-ſprung hoſpitals of the laſt thirty years! Did their governors conſider who were the phyſicians, very few of them would be ſo inhuman as to put the poor creatures under their care: can it be denied, but moſt of them have turned phyſicians, becauſe they were too ignorant to ſucceed when apothecaries; not ſkilful enough when ſurgeon; or too ſtupid, even for a low congregation of diſſenters? In theſe profeſſions, their folly and ignorance are apparent to the vulgar; but phyſic, is too deep a ſcience to be underſtood by very few, except the profeſſion; hard words, and technical terms, tho' miſapplied, and wrong pronounced, give as high an idea of profound learning to an unintelligent perſon, as if in ſkill, and preciſion, the pretended doctor was another Hippocrates: and the learned

learned regulars of our univerſities, and fellows of the royal college having laid aſide their gowns, the proper garb of the literati, for that ridiculous, and abſurd uniform, an enormous wig; have put it in the power of every Scotch-degree purchaſer to become in appearance, as good a phyſician as the ſixteen years ſtudent from Oxford, or Cambridge. Theſe banes to literature, theſe worſt ſpecies of pick-pockets, who take our money to deſtroy our conſtitution, and by their blunders encreaſe thoſe maladies they are paid to cure, are the ſubſtitutes of phyſicians to theſe modern hoſpitals, and will be ſo as long as they remain; for men of education will deem it a diſgrace to be connected with them. So long as theſe hoſpitals remain, the labouring people will find acceſs ſo eaſy, that they will defy the terrors of a ſick bed, once the great ſpur to induſtry. Theſe, like many other abuſes, under the notion of charity, contribute to idleneſs becoming ſo univerſal, and how can it be otherwiſe, when you have raiſed

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wages to double what they were within theſe twenty years, and at the ſame time, made a gratis-proviſion for all the exigencies of life; ſo that it is ridiculous to conceive any perſon will ſubmit to hard labour, when the money gained is rendered uſeleſs.

THE CHARITY SCHOOLS are another univerſal nurſery for idleneſs; nor is it eaſy to conceive, or invent any thing more deſtructive to the intereſt, and very fundamental principles of a nation entirely dependent on its trade and manufactures, than the giving an education to the children of the loweſt claſs of your people, that will make them contemn thoſe drudgeries for which they were born. The people, on whom your wealth and conſequence at home and abroad is entirely dependent, are thoſe employed in the iron, cloth, and other manufactures of the loweſt, and moſt laborious kinds; now, is it poſſible for theſe people to be made better workmen, more induſtrious, or in any other reſpect more beneficial to

themſelves, or the ſtate, by being taught writing and accounts? But it is very evident, and well known, that the effects are different, for it makes them idle and inſolent. While they are acquiring their knowledge, they get a habit of ſloth and indolence: this makes them ſhun the uſeful laborious employs of their parents, for the eaſy occupations of footmen; or, if they have more than ordinary conceit of their qualifications, they glut the compting-houſe, and if not fit for a higher employ, rather than continue in their more uſeful ſtation, they enter into the army. It is far from my intention to inſinuate that theſe are uſeleſs people; but theſe occupations are allotted for, and adapted to thoſe, who will not ſubmit to labour, and of theſe there are more than enough; ſo that the man taken from the plough, the loom, or the anvil, and made a footman, a clerk, or a ſoldier, is taken from induſtry to idleneſs, and is little better than loſt to ſociety. The fatal effects of a general diffuſion of learning, cannot be viewed in a ſtronger

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light, than by looking to the northern part of this kingdom, and ſeeing if you can aſſign any reaſon for the Scotch remaining till within theſe few years, a proud ſet of uſeleſs beggars; but, becauſe learning was ſo univerſally ſought after, and ſo eaſily obtained. Tho' learning cannot incapacitate a man for labour; yet the effect is as fatal to the public, as if it abſolutely did; the man who underſtands Horace, or merchants accounts, may, if he pleaſes, be an excellent black-ſmith, mend ſhoes, or traverſe the country in the character of a tinker; but the fact is, that thoſe who are poſſeſſed of theſe qualifications, will much ſooner ſtarve than ſubmit to them. The Scotch are daily laying aſide literature, for traffic; and the good effects are already apparent: they are no longer prone to rebellions, deſtroying and dethroning their princes, ſtoning and quarrelling with their teachers, all which were the conſequences of their poverty, pride, and inſolence; now, they prefer the ſuppoſed diſgrace of trade, to the dignity of

a bare-foot ſcholar. The gentry, who formerly forſook their country, and ſought ſervice in the armies of foreign princes, enrich themſelves, and benefit the ſtate by becoming merchants; this example of their ſuperiors, diffuſes a ſpirit of induſtry among the lower people, who, from being robbers, and beggars, becauſe they underſtood latin, and therefore labour was too mean, are becoming uſeful manufacturers, or applying to fiſhery. What can be more apparent, than that the Scotch have made a very advantageous, and deſirable change; and nothing ought to be dreaded more by us, than becoming what the Scotch have been? Nothing is more likely to bring about this fatal revolution by deſtroying all tendency to induſtry, than the keeping lads without labour, at a charity ſchool, learning writing and accounts, till thirteen or fourteen years age. The advocates for theſe ſchools aſſert, that they promote religion and good manners, but for this I appeal to the fact; obſerve the charity boys in the ſtreets, and you

will find them the very worſt ſpecies of black-guards, ſwearers, exceeding inſolent, and in all reſpects abandoned, and profligate to the greateſt degree. Thoſe who think education prevents lads taking wicked courſes, let them attend to the executions, and they will not find that ignorance, or ſtupidity, bring many to the gallows; but on the contrary that roguery requires natural, and acquired abilities; and that improper education, by being the grand cauſe of idleneſs and pride, the natural conſequence of it is vice. The generality of mankind, not having a capacity to diſtinguiſh the tendency of actions, farther than as they effect individuals, they very often condemn in private perſons what they applaud, and promote when applied to the whole body. There is not perhaps an inſtance of a perſon ſo void of penetration, but can ſee that a merchant, whoſe traffic is cloth, is beholden to the poor labouring weavers, and ſpinners for his affluence, ſplendor, and dignity, or, that would heſitate to pronounce

nounce ſuch a merchant mad, if he ſaw him animated with a Pruſſian zeal, take a drum, and with premiums entice all his manufacturers over to Germany, there by ſword and diſeaſe, to fall a ſacrifice to the intereſt of ungrateful foreign princes: yet, where was the man who arraigned the citizens of London of folly, when they, as a body, did this very act? And very numerous were thoſe traders, that gave large ſums, to advance this deſtructive ſcheme. The charity ſchools are another inſtance of this want of diſcernment in mankind; for the very people, who contribute to make all the poor boys in a pariſh idle, would condemn it in an individual, and cenſure a poor man who ſuffered his children to neglect their neceſſary duty, in order to acquire uſeleſs knowledge, or laugh at the folly of a rich freeholder, who deprived his tenants of their carters, ploughmen, and threſhers, in order to accompliſh them for the counting-houſe. Theſe ſchools might have been neceſſary in the time of ignorance, and ſuperſtition, when you wanted

wanted people of education, and when your labourers were too numerous; but now the ſtate of things is quite altered; you want the common labouring people, and you are over-ſtocked with thoſe that apply to genteel employs; for thoſe that get from the drudgeries of life into a better ſtation, will never ſubmit to them again, the conſequence of which is, that thoſe who ſubmit to them, will expect greater rewards, and their ſcarcity, will oblige you to comply with their demands; and thus miſapplied, and improper charities, will ruin us as a trading nation.

I ſhall not enter into farther conſiderations of any particular charities, but ſubmit a few thoughts on the neceſſity, and poſſibility of making one general proviſion for the poor, and ſuppreſſing, and prohibiting all private charities. It ſeems to me exceedingly clear, that when there is an univerſal proviſion for every perſon that cannot labour, or may in any reſpect be deemed an object of charity,

rity, there can be no neceſſity for the aids of private hoſpitals: for ſaying that they are not ſo well taken care of, or not attended by ſuch able phyſicians, is no argument, againſt a public proviſion, it only proves that the poors laws are faulty; for the neceſſary hoſpitals might ſtill remain, only put under the direction of the public, inſtead of private people. A general public proviſion for the poor, will in every reſpect be preferable to theſe hoſpitals, under private direction, detached from, and independent of the general ſyſtem; relief from the public will be deemed diſgraceful, and contemptible, which ſhould never fail attending thoſe that receive charity; becauſe, nothing is more evident, than that every method ought to be purſued, that lays the labouring people under a neceſſity of ſupporting themſelves; for as I have ſaid before, it is more prejudicial to a trading country, to have the inhabitants live in idleneſs than to loſe them; as the idle are burthenſome to the induſtrious; for this reaſon, our anceſtors made all thoſe that

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received charity wear badges, and deprived them of their votes at elections, and took every other method to make indigence terrible in the ideas of mankind; ſo that it became the ſtudy of their whole lives to avoid, by induſtry, the certain diſgrace, and miſery of the indolent. It is apparent that theſe charities, ſo far from diminiſhing, encreaſe the objects, or elſe the many thouſands annually relieved, and the vaſt ſums expended in theſe private hoſpitals would leſſen the public expence; but you ſee the exact contrary, for the poors rates daily encreaſe.

I do not ſee a poſſibility of remedying theſe great, and encreaſing evils, but by a thorough reformation of the laws relating to the poor; or, more properly, aboliſhing all the preſent, and making an entire new ſyſtem; that there are great difficulties attending theſe alterations cannot be denied, but one ſhould hope, its neceſſity will induce the legiſlator to the undertaking, however ar-

duous. Innumerable were the obſtacles to a militia: yet, by the perſeverance, and indefatigability of a few, that has been brought to a perfection not to be expected; and the ſame zeal, and patriotic ſpirit will with much greater eaſe, put the poors laws on a footing, that will diſcourage, inſtead of countenancing vice and ſloth; and relieve the poor houſe-keepers from a tax become almoſt inſupportable.

I SHALL now proceed to ſubmit a ſketch of a new ſyſtem of poors laws; this part of the undertaking is much more difficult, as well as much more neceſſary, than the preceeding part; however, the difficulty ſhall not deter me from giving a few hints, as I ſhould think myſelf happy tho' not one of my propoſals ſhould be approved; if it ſhould excite thoſe better qualified, to employ themſelves in ſo uſeful and beneficial a work, to refute my errors, and give a better plan.

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THE POORS TAX, I apprehend, ought to be an equal pound tax through England; aſſeſſed, and collected in the exact ſame manner as the land-tax. My reaſon for preferring this to the preſent method is, that the pariſh rates are exceedingly unequal; the rich pariſhes paying little more than ſix pence in the pound, while the poor pariſhes pay near four ſhillings, beſides, they are, and always will be expoſed to the greateſt abuſes, as it muſt fall to the lot of the loweſt of the people to be the managers, who will diſtribute the money according to their prejudices, and connections, and by miſapplication, encourage ſloth with what is deſigned for the helpleſs; and it is greatly to be feared laviſh more in gluttony, than they apply to the poor. By a national tax, inſtead of the pariſh rates, it will become a matter of indifference, where the poor are maintained; ſo that the money at preſent ſquandered in removals, or beſtowed on the lawyers in diſputing ſettlements will be ſaved. I ſee no objection to the receivers, and collectors of the

land-tax, being employed in collecting this tax; as the additional trouble will be but little, I think half the money paid for the receipt of the former, will be enough for this.

In each county, there ſhould be Commissioners for the management, and direction of the poor; I ſhould think it more advantageous to the public, to affix ſufficient ſalaries to theſe offices, than to expect them to be undertaken, and executed properly without reward. A ſallary will induce people of abilities, not only to undertake it, but to make themſelves maſters of the buſineſs, as vaſt numbers prefer an office of this kind to the uncertain purſuits of a profeſſion; whereas, if people are obliged to take the office, you will find them as improperly managed, as they are under the preſent laws. Theſe commiſſioners ſhould have the ſole management of all the hoſpitals, work-houſes, and infirmaries, in their reſpective counties, appoint their phyſicians, ſurgeons, and other officers; and

I ſhould

I ſhould think it very beneficial to ſociety, if one of them was obliged to reſide on the ſpot, ſo as to have their affairs under immediate inſpection; this is done by the governors in the royal hoſpitals of Greenwich and Chelſea; and in the dock-yards, one of the commiſſioners is always reſident.

In moſt counties, one HOSPITAL will be quite ſufficient; the vaſt, and enormous city of London will make more neceſſary in Middleſex: yet, the three before mentioned, St. Bartholomew's, St. Thomas's, and St. George's, will be able to receive all the ſick and lame that ought to be relieved; the ſingle circumſtance of making relief in hoſpitals like receiving alms, attended with diſgrace and loſs of privileges, will greatly diminiſh the patients; every diſeaſed perſon ought to be admitted on application without fee, reward, or even recommendation; for it is a great and ſhocking barbarity, attending the preſent hoſpitals, that miſery and immediate danger will not gain admittance

tance, without an order from one of the important, and deſpotic governors, ſecurity for burial, and ſeveral fees; by which means, the real objects are left to expire unaſſiſted, while theſe places are filled with the ſlighteſt complaints. Tho' patients ought to be admitted without any inquiry, yet, before they were diſcharged, there ſhould be the ſtricteſt examination as to their circumſtances: if they were able to pay, they ought to make ample ſatisfaction to the public for their cure and maintenance; in all caſes where their diſorders proceeded from vice, or debauchery, if unable to pay, they ſhould be ſent as ſoon as cured, to the work-houſe to be there detained, until they had reimburſed the houſe by their labour. The lying-in-hoſpitals, tho' at preſent very prejudicial, may be made an uſefull part of the poors ſyſtem; and it may be found neceſſary in populous counties, to ſet apart a particular hoſpital for theſe women; and no injury can ariſe to ſociety from them, when ſuch only are admitted, as the

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public muſt otherwiſe maintain. The hoſpitals for lunatics, are the moſt unexceptionable of all charities; but there can be no pretence for extending them to every county, or perhaps to any other than Middleſex; as I am well informed, that Bethlem, and St. Luke's will, with a little addition, receive all theſe objects in the nation. The Foundling may be made a moſt uſeful inſtitution; under a new poors ſyſtem, not as an open and undiſtinguiſhing receptacle of the offſpring of the indolent; but as a nurſery for orphans.

THE WORKHOUSES ſhould be on a very different footing to what they are at preſent; they ſhould not ſuffer any perſon to remain within their walls for one day, without earning their ſubſiſtence; I would have them free of acceſs to every inhabitant in the kingdom; but when admitted, they ſhould not be at liberty to leave it till they had paid for their reſidence. Such a workhouſe would anſwer all the valuable, and rational ends

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of the Magdalene, or Aſylum: the reforming of proſtitutes is ſo impracticable an abſurdity, that I think the promoter of this ſcheme, quite equal to undertake the bleaching of black-moors. Beſides, I do not think, for the reaſons I have aſſigned under that head, that it is to be wiſhed; but, take away the neceſſity many unfortunate girls are reduced to of becoming proſtitutes, and it will anſwer a very valuable end, indeed. Every perſon converſant with the world, muſt recollect various inſtances of young females, allured by the promiſe of marriage, and other falſe and deluſive arguments, which their innocence, inexperience, and confidence in their deceivers, make them eaſily credit, prompted, nay, intoxicated with the ſtrongeſt of human paſſions, forſake their real, and put themſelves in the power of theſe imaginary friends, who, as ſoon as they have debauched them, leave them deſtitute of friend, of money, of lodging, ſo that they become an immediate prey to bauds, and debauchers; what can the

poor miſerable wretches do? Their unrelenting friends reſent the firſt offence to that degree of cruelty, that they will not receive even the penitent; if they accept the bawd's offer, they flatter themſelves that ſome incident may furniſh them with a releaſe; if they refuſe it, they muſt periſh in the ſtreet. Therefore, make ſome univerſal public reception, without ſtigmatiſing them as proſtitutes, and you will find theſe girls much more ſolicitous to live there in chaſtity, till their friends will receive them, than to let out their bodies to be hackneyed, without either inclination or profit, only for the benefit of that diſgrace to the ſex, a bawd. An inſtitution of this kind, will deſtroy every pretence for begging; how many ſtout, and able-bodied men and women, do we ſee in the ſtreets among the common beggars; who, in every reſpect, except inclination, are equal to the hardeſt labour! receive them all, employ them in what they are the beſt adapted to; and make theſe terrors to ſociety, and

their children beneficial to the community. In theſe houſes, I would make life as agreeable as poſſible to the virtuous, and induſtrious; and as terrible to the wicked and indolent; they ſhould be like the Dutch houſes of correction, where every perſon is furniſhed with materials and tools for his buſineſs, and is ſo well paid for his labour, that there are many inſtances of their maintaining themſelves, and ſaving a conſiderable ſum of money: and thoſe that refuſe to work, they puniſh with the greateſt ſeverity; one method is to put the delinquent into a ciſtern of water, which fills as faſt as he pumps it out, ſo that if he neglects to pump, he is drowned. We are in England profuſe with our rewards, but exceedingly remiſs as to puniſhments, not conſidering that the major part of mankind are good, merely to avoid the fatal conſequence of being otherwiſe.

THERE ſhould be an INFIRMARY, for the reception of thoſe, that are in any reſpect

reſpect incapacitated from labour. It is a great diſgrace to the government of any country to have the ſtreets, and highways infeſted with beggars: but more ſo with ſuch as are ſhocking ſpectacles, whom none can view without being exceedingly terrified, and who often are of fatal conſequence to breeding women; theſe nuſances ought to be confined in theſe infirmaries; this will be done with the univerſal conſent, and approbation of mankind, as ſoon as you have a national poors tax; but never will, ſo long as it is the ſtudy of every pariſh to avoid incumbering themſelves with vagabonds; and who promote their gaining a maintenance in any way they like, rather than put their particular pariſh to expence, when the benefit is to the whole community.

If the work-houſes were privileged places, as far as an exemption from arreſts for ſmall ſums, I think great advantages might ariſe from it, I am ap-

priſed of ſome objections, and mention it only as a hint.

I SHALL not enter into the minute parts of the plan, as that is properly the buſineſs of the law-makers; it ſeems very evident, that the complicated affair of the poor, which at preſent employs three or four perſons, in every pariſh of the kingdom, may be more effectually executed by eight or ten commiſſioners in each county. If this ſcheme ſhould be thought by the reader in any reſpect impracticable, let them conſider the exciſe, and aſſign a reaſon, why the poor cannot be managed by a few commiſſioners, as well as the revenue: the ſimplicity, and plainneſs of the plan, will make it almoſt execute itſelf; every perſon will know where to have immediate help, and if they are unable to aſſiſt themſelves, it is incumbent on the public to provide for them: but, if otherwiſe, they will be made pay in money, or what is more valuable in labour.

I SHALL now proceed to conſider the neceſſity of ſuppreſſing, and prohibiting all hoſpitals of a private nature, and moſt other charitable inſtitutions, and appropriating their incomes to the general ſtock, for the relief of the poor. Of what uſe to the public, or to any individual, can theſe foundations be, when every perſon is relieved immediately on application? but, if they are ſuffered to remain, they will be exceedingly prejudicial: becauſe, they will alienate the minds of the common people from the public hoſpitals. I ſee no injury done by ſuch a proceeding even to the founders; for, ſuppoſing it was a ſilly ambition to immortalize their names, or they thought it would attone for the enormous crimes attendant on getting the money, (a piece of prieſt-craft as zealouſly inculcated by the diſſenting, and methodiſtical teachers of this kingdom, as by any monks, or jeſuits in Europe; all of whom make charity a traffic!) or, whatever other reaſons might induce theſe fools, or villains legally to rob their heirs,

heirs, to found hoſpitals; yet, none ever allowed theſe to be his motives, but pretended, their deſign to be healing the ſick, feeding the hungry, or clothing the naked; it ſurely can be no injury to theſe imaginary ſaints, to allow their aſſertions; if ſo, when the public have eſtabliſhed hoſpitals and work-houſes, in every part of the kingdom, ſufficient to receive all real objects of charity; why ſhould theſe hoſpitals, which will be rendered ſo entirely uſeleſs, be ſuffered to remain? Or, what can be alleged againſt appropriating their incomes to the uſe of the poor, which was, or ought to have been the intention of the donors? And eſpecially, when this will anſwer another very valuable, truly noble, and charitable end, that of contributing to relieve the induſtrious, and laborious houſe-keepers, from the moſt enormous, oppreſſive, and unneceſſary tax that ever ſubſiſted.

As ALMS-HOUSES, and ſuch like inſtitutions, will be rendered uſeleſs, by the

the infirmaries, therefore, they ought to be ſuppreſſed; and I wiſh the overgrown eſtates of ſome coporate bodies could be included in the alienation. Univerſal deſtruction ſhould be the fate of the charity-ſchools, which are at preſent the the manſions of vice and ſloth; and who train all that come within their doors to a deteſtation of labour and induſtry. This muſt be confined to thoſe that educate poor mechanics; for ſuch as eat the bread of learning cannot be too accompliſhed; for which reaſon all ſchools that ſend the lads they educate to the univerſity, muſt remain; it being as neceſſary for the community, to have the divine, the lawyer, and the phyſician ſtudy, as the mechanic to labour. But avoid that greateſt of evils, a general diffuſion of learning, leſt we like the Scotch, ſhould find our loweſt mechanics abſurdly, and unneceſſarily learned, and gentlemen of profeſſions ridiculouſly ignorant, the cobler pretending to latin, while claſſical knowledge is the utmoſt extent of the phyſicians; but with them

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it cannot be otherwiſe, their ſchools are tolerable, but the places they call univerſities, take but four years to compleat their ſtudents, in which time they are to acquire the arts and ſciences, and all the learned languages, except latin; they generally finiſh their ſtudies, are admitted to the degree of maſter of arts, and leave the univerſity, at the age of ſixteen, the proper time for quitting ſchool; then come into England, and with the help of claſſical quotations, and ſelf-conceit, perſuade the credulous people of this capital, that they are more profound in literature, than the truly learned graduates of Oxford, and Cambridge.

It will be unneceſſary to conſider the legality of confiſcating all the eſtates belonging to charities, becauſe, by the very nature of charitable inſtitutions, they are ſuppoſed beneficial, are deſigned for the uſe, and are the abſolute property of the public; and whenever they become either detrimental, or uſeleſs, it is incum-

incumbent on the ſtate, to apply their incomes to ſome neceſſary purpoſe; ſuch a proceeding is juſtified by the practice of all nations in Europe, who have made it a never-failing rule, to ſuppreſs thoſe corporate bodies, who either deviated from the intent of their foundations, or whoſe foundations were become inconſiſtent with the welfare of the public; a preſent inſtance is the ſuppreſſion of the jeſuits in France, and other parts of Europe. Every perſon converſant with Engliſh hiſtory will find many inſtances of this; one of which, that of the reformation, there can ſcarcely be a perſon in the kingdom ignorant of, at which time all the monaſteries, and other religious houſes were ſuppreſſed, and all their eſtates applied to the uſe of the crown. The temporal reaſons for making this univerſal havock, were the ſame that makes the deſtruction of our charitable inſtitutions ſo neceſſary; they diverted many thouſands of the prime of the inhabitants from labour, and the uſefull duties of life, to thoſe ridiculous

employs of telling beads, penances, confeſſions, and other innumerable abſurdities, kept them, under pretence of religion, from that moſt divine, and political inſtitution matrimony; while they were daily committing the moſt enormous of human crimes, ſome indulging in ſuch as are unnatural to the greateſt degree of horror; and others murdering their offspring to conceal their debauchery, and continue the impoſition of celibacy. Tho' I by no means accuſe our charities of occaſioning crimes of this ſuperlative nature, yet they promote vice, and as to idleneſs, they are in every reſpect, as bad as the monasteries. The legiſlators right to deſtroy theſe religious abuſes, is ſo far from being doubted that it was, is, and ever will be deemed a moſt meritorious action, by the ſenſible and unbigotted part of mankind; and if the charities of this age meet the ſame fate, it can only fail of approbation from thoſe, whoſe private views and emoluments ſupport their charitable zeal. I muſt obſerve one very

material difference between theſe religious charities, and the modern hoſpitals, which is, that the former were ſtrictly legal, whereas, the latter are contrary to law; for no ſet of men have a diſcretionary power to raiſe money for charitable uſes, but ought to have a brief, or licence; nor can an hoſpital be founded, without a charter, and an endowment: it is therefore very apparent that theſe ſubſcription-hoſpitals are unlawful; and ſo far from the legiſlators being guilty of an injury to ſociety by ſuppreſſing them, they will be doing their duty in aboliſhing ſo many frauds, and groſs impoſitions.

As the bad management of the POOR, is one of the greateſt grievances this nation labours under, when can a reformation be propoſed with greater propriety, than at preſent? when a monarch is on the throne, whoſe natural inclination, and chief ſtudy is the happineſs of his people, whoſe greateſt concern

their oppreſſion; and when the nations happineſs can only be blaſted by a weak ignorant or prejudiced miniſter; when we have a new parliament, who moſt undoubtedly ſee, and feel the diſtreſſes of their conſtituents, by ſo large an addition to the national debt, before a laſting and honourable peace could be obtained; before our proud foes would ſubmit to give up what our unparalleled ſucceſſes give us a right to demand; without which, all our men and money would have been laviſhed in vain. I am very certain, that the new ſyſtem of poors laws would ſave, on an average, each houſe-keeper more than two ſhillings in the pound: and if ſo, it would greatly alleviate the diſtreſs occaſioned by the expence of the late war.

LAST year's ſupplies falling on the tenant, by an additional tax on windows, the regulation of the poors laws are rendered ſtill more neceſſary; and the very great ſcarcity of hands, ſhews the neceſſity of depriving the labouring people of every

method of living in idleneſs. If vagabonds and robbers are complained of at preſent, what may we expect, when our vaſt army and navy come to be diſbanded, at the long-wiſhed for return of peace; which at preſent, contains moſt of the abandoned, many who have had their halters looſed, on condition of ſerving the king, and many thouſands whoſe crimes have been death, who have eſcaped proſecution on this condition; when theſe half-hanged miſcreants, come to be let looſe on the public, what murders, rapines, and robberies may not be expected, if the laws, or the execution of them, are ſuffered to continue as lax, as at preſent!

FINIS.